THE

TOWER;

OR THE

Romance of Ruthyne.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE

AUTHORESS OF MANFREDI.

VOL. I.

——— Better be with the dead,
Whom we, to gain our place, have sent to peace;
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless extacy.———

SHAKESPEARE.

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DEDICATION

To Mrs. MARRIOTT,

MADAM,

WITH a due ſenſe of little deſerving permiſſion to have the honour of affixing your Name to a trifle like this, I feel infinitely too much reſpect, to addreſs you in the uſual ſtyle of Dedications; for, highly unbecoming would it be in me, to ſtate to the Public, particular virtues, where the whole tenor of conduct is ſuch, as every one admires, and every one would be happy to imitate.

IN expreſſing my Gratitude, I can find no terms that will ſufficiently convey my ſenſations: the ſanction afforded on the preſent occaſion, is calculated to emulate me to a yet more aſſiduous exertion of my young and feeble talents, in future; and, ſhould I ever be fortunate enough to produce any thing worthy your approbation, I ſhall have the ſincere ſatisfaction of reflecting, it was your cheering encouragement produced the effect.

WERE every mind like yours, Madam, zealous to promote and patroniſe the efforts of Youth, I ſhould not have the dread I now feel, in diſplaying the following pages to the Public Eye; yet I truſt in the general indulgence granted to

Female

Female inability, pleading my confined education and retired ſituation in Life, as a palliation of the defects that will be found in the courſe of my work.

WITH the greateſt Reſpect, unfeigned Gratitude, and moſt ardent hopes of a continuation of the Bleſſings you now enjoy in Yourſelf and amiable Family,

I am, Madam,

Your moſt dutiful Servant,

SARAH LANSDELL.

THE

TOWER, &c.

CHAP. I.

Thro' the dim veil of Ev'ning's duſky ſhade,
Near ſome lone fane, or yews funereal green;
What dreary forms has magic fear ſurvey'd!
What ſhrouded ſpectres ſuperſtition ſeen!

SHENSTONE.

IT was one of the moſt gloomy and uncomfortable nights of a very ſtormy winter, that Matilda and Auguſta were penſively ruminating in a dreary apartment of Ruthyne Tower; round which the wind whiſtled with melancholy ſhrillneſs, and

ſometimes ſwelled loud enough to be miſtaken by the ſiſters, for diſtant thunder. The moon at intervals trembled between the ſeparating clouds; but the watery brightneſs ſhe threw on their rugged edges, did but ſerve to heighten the effect of the ſtorm, and render yet more unpleaſant, the appearance of the room in which they were ſitting, by a greater diſplay of its Gothic furniture than what a decaying fire afforded.

Abſorbed as they were, by reflecting on the events of the two preceding days, the ſiſters remained ſilent; till a tremendous guſt of wind drove the rain with violence againſt the caſement, and added to the ſolemnity of the gloom, by deeply howling through the irregular paſſages of the decayed Tower.

Auguſta, gradually drawing her chair nearer to her ſiſter, then broke the ſilence:

"It ſeems, my deareſt Matilda, that the elements

elements have alſo joined their influence with the cruel lady Arthurine! By what means ſhe has made my father treat us thus unkindly, I cannot conjecture!"

"I have for ſome months perceived a growing coldneſs in lord Arthurine: I am ſurpriſed, Auguſta, you have overlooked it?"

"I have *ſeen* it, and *felt* it, but he was not uſed to be ſo eaſily influenced!"

"That is very true; I am inclined to believe there are other motives than what are avowed, that have induced them to ſend us hither. To imagine, that the only cauſe is------But no matter; we muſt now endeavour to make ourſelves as comfortable, as the diſorder and deſolation of the place will permit."

"Ah! it is a melancholy priſon," replied Auguſta, as ſhe fearfully turned her head.

"No, my deareſt ſiſter, not a priſon," (ſaid Matilda) making a faint attempt at cheerfulneſs, to contradict her feelings;--Not abſolutely a priſon: you know we have permiſſion to range for a conſiderable extent round the country."

"Yes," was the only anſwer given by the depreſſed Auguſta, and a ſilence of ſome minutes enſued, till ſhe enquired if they were not to have candles.

"I was thinking the ſervants had forgot us," ſaid Matilda, "ſhall we go and call for them?"

"If you pleaſe;---I think we had better---But ſure it lightens!"

"Very poſſibly," ſaid Matilda, and opening the door, ſhe began to proceed cautiouſly along a broad paſſage, when another flaſh of lightning illumined the whole place.

Auguſta

Auguſta ſtarted, but it ſhewed to Matilda, the balluſtrade of a ſpacious ſtone ſtaircaſe ; here they ſtopped, and Matilda was heſitating about deſcending, when her attention was called by the preſſure of her ſiſter's hand. She liſtened, and heard footſteps approaching : when they arrived underneath, ſhe called, but it was faintly ; and immediately all was ſilence. She called again ; and a deep voice returned, " Did any body ſpeak."

" Yes," ſaid Matilda.

" What do you want," was demanded in the ſame hollow tone.

" We want lights," cried the ſiſters.

" I beg your pardon, my ladies," muttered the man, " I thought it had been one of the maids ; but I will ſend them."

They found the way back to the room they had quitted, and ſoon after came the ſervants

ſervants with the candles, attended by a ſtout country lad.

"Could you not have brought the lights without troubling the young man?" aſked Matilda.

"Yes, my lady, but---we thought we might miſs the way."

Matilda diſpatched David for more fuel, and ordered the fire to be re-lighted.

Martha and her companion, who were cautiouſly ſurveying the room, ſprang forward with alacrity, and began to prepare for the fire.

The boy ſoon returned, loaded with wood; and while the ſervants were making the fire, the ladies ſilently examined the heavy ancient furniture, which was intended once to adorn the ſtill more ancient room.

David,

David, whoſe travels had never extended beyond the next market-town, at eight miles diſtance, felt much ſurpriſe on viewing the delicate forms of the beautiful ſiſters ; and the ſoft tone of Matilda's voice, when ſhe ordered him to fetch the wood, had ſuch an effect on him, that he could ſcarcely believe they were of the ſame order of beings as the females he had heretofore ſeen.

As ſoon as the fire had aſſumed a cheerful blaze, and the hearth was cleaned, Matilda begged Martha to order the ſupper immediately, as they were fatigued with their journey, and wiſhed to retire ſoon. A repaſt much better than they expected to ſee, was ſet before them, and David being diſmiſſed, Auguſta could not repreſs the curioſity that aroſe in her boſom, to know ſomewhat of the inhabitants of the Tower. She began, by enquiring concerning David, and was informed he was their ſervant--as the earl of Arthurine had deſired Humphry to procure one for them. This mark of

their

their father's attention, ſoothed the ſenſibility, that had been wounded by his ſending them to ſo inhoſpitable a place, at a ſeaſon the moſt inclement; and the ſiſters exchanged looks, that did not eſcape the penetration of Martha.

"I aſſure your ladyſhips," ſaid ſhe, as ſhe handed ſome bread," David ſeems a very good ſort of a young man."

"I am very glad to hear it; but pray who is the Humphry you mention?" ſaid the inquiſitive Auguſta.

"He is the man, my lady, as David informs Suſan and I, who has taken care of this old place for many years; but we have not ſeen much of him, for he hardly ſtays five minutes at a time with us.--He ſeems much like his wife!"

"Wife!" exclaimed Auguſta.

"Oh yes, my lady, he has a wife, as old

as

as himſelf, and as croſs and ill-natured too; why, ma'am ſhe will hardly ſpeak to a body, except it be to mutter--yes or no!"

"Indeed!" ſaid Matilda.

"Yes, my lady," ſaid Suſan, I aſſure you it is true: if it had not been for David, I ſhould not much like this diſmal place, for poor Margaret, the cook, is tired to death."

The two ſervants continued to run on, expreſſing their diſlike of the keepers of the Tower, and laſtly, by degrees, of the Tower itſelf; and their fears, that if many ſtorms like the one then raging, viſited them, the old walls would not be able to withſtand their fury; for the thunder now began to advance, and the wind ſtill ſwelled along the paſſages, ſeeming ready to burſt open the lofty doors, and tear with irreſiſtible force, the brown wainſcot from the walls:---it ſometimes made its progreſs round the ſpacious room, with ſuch rapidity,

ty, as to move the ancient pictures that compoſed its moſt conſpicuous ornaments.

From this uncomfortable ſituation, the ſiſters wiſhed to remove ; and their ſupper being ſoon over, the maids were ordered to attend as ſoon as their own was finiſhed.

In about half an hour they came, and the ſiſters entered a broad gallery, along which, their footſteps multiplied by echoes, ran in whiſpering murmurs; and they ſilently followed the trembling maids, till they came to the top of the ſtair-caſe which led to a hall, where they heard voices ſeemingly in earneſt diſcourſe, but which were not ſufficiently loud for them to diſtinguiſh the ſubject.

The ſervants had proceeded nearly the extent of the gallery, when they looked back and finding themſelves alone, were haſtily returning :---at this moment, the converſation below ceaſed, and a light produced from under a garment, was held up,

and

and as Matilda looked down the ſtair-caſe, it threw its red gleams on a countenance ſo harſh and dark, that added to a few duſky pillars, imperfectly ſeen in the gloom beyond it, formed a picture which almoſt made her ſhudder.

She ſtopped not to inveſtigate the feelings of Auguſta, but meeting the ſervants, haſtily entered the chamber, the door of which they had opened.

While they were undreſſing, Auguſta made earneſt enquiries concerning Humphry's perſon; and from the account given by the maids, neither of the ſiſters doubted whom they had ſeen.

They were ſoon in bed, and quickly forgetting the diſagreeable impreſſions, which the ſolitary ſituation, and uncouth furniture of their chamber had given them, (notwithſtanding the continued ſtorm,) experienced a refreſhing ſleep.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

THE earl of Arthurine married in his youth, an Italian lady, who captivated him in his travels; and who died at the birth of a ſecond daughter, which happened ſeveral years after the union.

His affection was not retained by his amiable lady till her death, nor did he transfer it to his daughters. Matilda and Auguſta were placed in a ſeparate part of the manſion, in which he generally reſided, and proper people being appointed to give them a good education, he thought little more

more of them, and again married a woman as different in diſpoſition to his former lady, as hers unfortunately had been to her lords.

Iſabella Frampton was only nineteen, and the earl more than thirty, when they firſt met. *She*, extremely ambitious as well as exquiſitely beautiful ;---and *he*, a ſlave to his paſſions : They were ſoon united ; and the counteſs, to the great encreaſe of the dominion, which by her faſcinating arts ſhe held over her lord, brought him a ſon and heir, two years after their marriage.

The little hold, Matilda and Auguſta had on his affections, now grew much weaker. The counteſs was a woman formed by nature, to pleaſe, and by art, to faſcinate. Her paſſions were controlled by conſummate cunning, rather than reaſon, when ſhe was ſenſible their effects would be dangerous to herſelf ; and with the moſt malignant diſpoſition, the moſt inveterate envy, and the meaneſt pride, ſhe joined an addreſs that could gloſs over her feelings, and make

them paſs with thoſe to whom ſhe would appear amiable, as ſo many ſenſibilities that did but adorn, inſtead of detracting from her conduct. With her refined ſubtlety, it is no wonder if ſhe ſoon taught the earl to center all his affections in herſelf and darling boy, or that he, content with knowing his daughters had good governeſſes and an able preceptor, could bear to paſs whole days, and ſometimes weeks, without ſeeing thoſe amiable beings, who were every hour ripening toward perfection.

When Matilda had attained her ſeventeenth year, the counteſs thought it time for their inſtructors to be diſmiſſed. The earl objected on Auguſta's account, who was not yet ſixteen; but lady Arthurine declared, ſhe was ſo much pleaſed with them, that ſhe wiſhed to have them more with her;---to introduce them into company, and ſhew them a ſmall part of that world, in which they were ſo calculated to ſhine. Tranſported at this proof of his counteſs's goodneſs of heart, the earl immediately diſmiſſed

miſſed the governeſſes and preceptor, which was the firſt ſerious unhappineſs the young ladies experienced; for, neglected by their father, they had no object on whom they could fix the affections that glowed in their boſoms, but on thoſe who had the care of their minds; and ſo ſtrong was their principles of gratitude, and a kind of filial love, that they imagined, with the ardour natural to youth, Mr. Ormond, and Meſdames La Fleur, were the only perſons in the world, who could ever have any part of their hearts.

Mr. Ormond, their preceptor, had been appointed to inſtruct them in muſic and painting, with other ſtudies proper for young women, which were ſuppoſed beyond the capacities of their governeſſes; but he finding the elder of thoſe ladies, had a finer taſte in theſe branches than himſelf, reſigned them to her care; and entering with almoſt paternal aſſiduity, on the other parts of his duty, gave his pupils a greater

inſight of literature, than generally falls to the ſhare of the female world.

It was not till ſometime after the departure of theſe dear friends, that the counteſs's character was fully developed to Matilda. Over them both, for a while, ſhe ſpread the magic chain of ſmiles and endearments; but finding ſhe was diſcovered by a penetration ſuperior to her own, ſhe threw off the maſk of kindneſs, and treated Matilda with a haughty politeneſs, that ſoon communicated itſelf to her ſiſter. The tranſition from kindneſs to diſtant civility, is not ſo eaſy but the moſt unſuſpecting will notice the change. Auguſta was grieved that they had loſt the favour of the counteſs, but Matilda ſoon pointed out to her, that it was leſs the effect of their conduct, than one of the flights of a verſatile mind.

A twelvemonth elapſed, in which the counteſs ſometimes betrayed her jealouſy of Matilda and Auguſta's ſuperior attractions: and, notwithſtanding her avowed intention

of

of uſhering them into the world, contrived as often as poſſible, to keep them in their own apartments, under various pretences, which ſhe never failed to render plauſible in the eyes of the earl.

This, by Auguſta, was ſometimes conſidered a reſtraint ;--but to Matilda it was highly pleaſing, as it gave her the opportunity of indulging her natural bent to ſolitude and ſtudy, and ſecured them both from the impertinence of lord Frampton Courcé ; who now about fourteen, was ſpirited up by his mother, to inſult his ſiſters whenever he thought proper.

Lord Arthurine's affection ſeemed to grow more eſtranged every day ; and the counteſs, at length, threw off every form, and treated the ſiſters with ſarcaſtic unkindneſs, whenever ſhe choſe they ſhould appear at her table. Matilda, ſome few times, attempted, in an indirect way, to appeal to her father ; but he treated all her efforts with the moſt repelling coldneſs, and wea-

ried with the fruitleſs attempt, ſhe gave it up.

Matilda was bleſſed with a quick diſcernment, and a ready conception; ſhe imagined, not without reaſon, that ſomething deciſive would follow this behaviour, and teſtified little ſurpriſe, when told by her father, he had ſome thoughts of ſending her with her ſiſter, for a few months, to Ruthyne Tower; which formed a part of his eſtates in North Wales: adding, lady Arthurine was ſorry to find their inſtructors had been diſmiſſed before their education was compleated; and he recommended a ſtrict attention to ſtudy, while in that ſolitude, which would be more favorable than Arthurine, where they met with continual interruptions.

Matilda's cheek glowed with anger and ſome degree of pride; ſhe was riſing from her ſeat, but recollecting herſelf, ſhe only bowed, in anſwer to the earl's ſpeech.

Auguſta's ſurpriſe, for a moment, ſuſpended

pended her faculties; but her native gaiety aroſe to her aſſiſtance, and ſhe ſportively enquired of her father, if ever he himſelf had been to Arthurine, to ſtudy; and obliquely glanced the queſtion, "whether they were inferior in any literal qualification to their lady mother."

The counteſs, who was in the room, coloured highly, and immediately left it, firſt darting a look of ineffable contempt on the harmleſs Auguſta, who was going on; when an angry exordium from her father, ſtopped her, and ſent her with Matilda, weeping to their chambers.

The counteſs had ſuffered all the rage of envy, to take poſſeſſion of her ſoul; and unable to bear any longer, its agonizing torments, aſſailed the earl, with complaints of Matilda and Auguſta's want of education.

He heard it at firſt, coolly, not gueſſing her aim, till ſhe enquired, if he did not think they were too much engroſſed by the

gaiety of the houſe, and whether, in ſome place more retired, they might not improve themſelves in literature, which would then become neceſſary to amuſe them.

The earl treated the propoſal with ſome little contempt, ſaying, he did not wiſh his daughters to be learned women.

The ſubtle counteſs found he was not in humour to liſten to her, and dropped the ſubject.

The evening preceding the day, in which the earl informed his daughters of his intentions, lady Arthurine ſeized a favorable moment, after ſome viſitors were retired, to diſplay her blandiſhments; and in a moment of good humour, diſtantly hinted her project again.

Encouraged, by receiving no repulſe, ſhe ventured to proceed.

" The young mind, my lord, is like poliſhed

poliſhed ſteel ; let it be worn, and it retains its brightneſs ; lay it by, and it will be ſullied. Your daughters will bear the compariſon : they never were well poliſhed, and they will loſe the little they have attained, if not placed in ſome ſituation, where, by being compelled to ſeek amuſement, in that which ought always to occupy them, they may be preſerved from that corroding ruſt, which will otherwiſe render them like many other young women of quality, frivolous, un-informed, and perhaps vicious."

The earl liſtened, and ſeemed to heſitate. The counteſs went on :

" You have a place, my lord, exactly ſuited to ſuch a purpoſe;--the Tower of Ruthyne."

The earl ſtarted ; it flaſhed on his mind, as puniſhment and a priſon, inſtead of benefit and improvement; but he turned to the counteſs, gazed on her ardent eye, her bewitching

witching mouth, round which, was playing the ſmile of entreaty ; and forgot the happineſs of his daughters.

The counteſs, delighted, imagined ſhe had perſuaded him by her reaſoning ; but, for once, ſhe placed too little to the account of her beauty. The earl was ſubdued, not convinced; he did not want penetration, and could not behold the mild ſpirit of genius that ſat in the eye of Matilda ; or the lively wit ſparkling in that of Auguſta, and deliberately pronounce them inanimate characters or uninformed minds.

After the information, little time elapſed before the ſcheme was put in execution. The counteſs preſſed them both in her arms at their departure, and with an enchanting appearance of ſorrow, declared, nothing but their immediate benefit, could have induced her to make ſo great a ſacrifice.

Auguſta was ſtaggered by this fineſſe, but

Matilda

Matilda looked ſo ſteadily in lady Arthurine's face, as to make her bluſh; and coldly bidding her adieu, ſtepped into the chaiſe that waited for them.

Lord Arthurine accompanied them on their journey, which paſſed in ſevere ſilence on his part; and ſome endeavours to mitigate his apparent anger, on that of his daughters.

The nearer they drew to their journey's end, the more dark became a cloud that ſettled on the earl's brow; and for the laſt ten miles, neither of the party uttered a word. The night, as has been deſcribed, was dark and ſtormy; and Matilda, looking out, as the carriage entered a rude kind of lawn, could juſt diſcern the battlements of an antique, and terror inſpiring building.

A few minutes after, the carriage ſtopped; and the earl deſcending, handed his daughters in ſilence into a hall; the deſolate appearance of which, made Auguſta keep cloſe

cloſe to her ſiſter, as they followed their father up a broad ſtair-caſe, whoſe heavy balluſtrade, added to the ſingular mixture of wildneſs and grandeur, that ſeemed to pervade the whole place.

Having ſeen them into a room, and warmed himſelf for a few minutes, the earl called to his ſervants, and announced his readineſs for departure.

"Does your lordſhip return to night?" ſaid Matilda, with ſurpriſe.

"I mean to commence my journey immediately," ſaid the earl.

"Indeed I am very ſorry, my lord, for I think it unſafe."

He returned no anſwer, but by bidding them good night, and was repeating his injunctions, that they would apply themſelves to thoſe ſtudies they had before neglected, when a footman entering, he left the room,

room, and deſcended into the hall; from whence they heard him enter his carriage, and drive from the door. They ruminated on his ſtrange behaviour, but reflection did but bewilder them, and as has been related, they retired to reſt with a determination, (at leaſt on the part of Matilda), of making the place as comfortable as circumſtances would permit.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

'Tis done! dread Winter ſpreads his lateſt glooms,
And reigns tremendous o'er the conquer'd year.
How dead the vegetable kingdom lies!
How dumb the tuneful!——Horror wide extends
His deſolate domain.

THOMSON.

THE ſiſters deſcended the next morning, to a room, where their breakfaſt was prepared for them, and which David and the maids, had exerted themſelves to make as comfortable as poſſible. A blazing fire rendered it ſomewhat cheerful, notwithſtanding

ing its gloomy ſize ; and the buſtle of David to procure them every convenience, often made them ſmile, and relieved the oppreſſion that hung heavy on their ſpirits.

The morning was overcaſt, and the ſtorm ſeemed not entirely over ; or, at leaſt, bore the appearance of recommencing. The proſpect from the windows, at this ſeaſon, accorded with the wildneſs of the Tower, and it ſeemed a ſpot, of all others, the moſt calculated to inſpire horror and deſpondence.

A leafleſs foreſt was ſeen on the left hand; and on the right, lofty and barren mountains reared their heads above ſome clumps of fir, which, inſtead of enlivening, ſerved to render the ſcene more rude. A large piece of water ſkirted the lawn : from whence, the riſing miſts added to the cheerleſs view ; and the faded landſcape that appeared between the foreſt and the mountains, was half loſt in the haze that obſcured the day.

On Auguſta, this combination of gloomy objects ſeemed to have peculiar effect, and when Matilda expreſſed her wiſh to ſee ſome of the other apartments, enquiring if it would be agreeable to her, ſhe faintly objected.

It was cold and damp in every place where there were no fires, and ſhe preferred remaining where ſhe could be a little comfortable.

But the want of amuſement, before the end of the morning, made her propoſe the very thing ſhe had rejected, and apologizing to her ſiſter for her former denial, ſhe begged they might ſee ſome of the lower rooms.

The body of the edifice was divided into ſeveral apartments, in general equally ſpacious, and all bearing the ſame gloomy aſpect. A room once intended for a ſaloon, opened on one ſide of the ſtair-caſe, and on the other, to the ſurpriſe and joy of them both,

well-ſtored library; but the humidity that ſat on every part of the furniture, forbade an examination of the books; and after looking on ſome old muſical inſtruments, which ſeemed of the Italian kind, they called David, and bidding him ſee the room was well aired, and put in order, they quitted it for another, which was hung round with portraits.

Matilda ſmiled to ſee Auguſta ſhudder at the fierce countenances of the warriors who frowned in mail, but her attention was ſoon engroſſed by the portrait of a beautiful young woman, whoſe delicate features were half ſhaded by a black veil, and ſtill more, by a touching melancholy, that rendered her countenance more intereſting than the moſt animated grace could poſſibly have done.

Auguſta fancied ſhe ſaw in it a ſlight reſemblance to Matilda; but both heſitated to call it their mother, as it was very unlike a miniature they had ſeen of her, in the poſſeſſion of the earl.

Not far from this, hung the picture of an elderly man, whoſe countenance partook of the ſenſibility depictured in the other, but it was tempered with apparent firmneſs, and mixed with ſome little degree of haughtineſs.

Theſe two portraits excited ſuch an intereſt in the boſoms of Matilda and Auguſta, that the reſt were paſſed almoſt unnoticed; but when they entered the hall with an intention of examining it, every ſenſation was loſt in aſtoniſhment, at the vaſt, yet regular proportion of its various parts. The lofty pillars that terminated in arches to ſupport as well as decorate the roof, the wide ſtair-caſe, and high narrow windows, formed ſo ſtriking a combination, that the ſiſters agreed there was a grandeur in the whole, that pleaſed them with its ſublimity, although it chilled them with its gloom.

On turning to a door they had not before obſerved, they found it was much heavier in its conſtruction, than any of the others; and

and Matilda endeavoured to open it for ſome time in vain; at length, finding it ſhake, and her curioſity being ſomewhat awakened by its appearance, ſhe applied her whole ſtrength, and it gave way.

Auguſta recoiled at the ſight of a long dark paſſage: at the farther end of which, was imperfectly ſeen, a door, ſomewhat ſimilar to that they had juſt opened. Matilda gathered her robe around her, and was carefully entering; but Auguſta declared ſhe was tired, and begged they might, for that day, give over their examination.

They accordingly returned to the room in which they had breakfaſted, and Matilda ſending for one of the old inſtruments they had ſeen in the library, pleaſed herſelf with endeavouring to reſtore it to its original tone; and ſo far ſucceeded, as to amuſe Auguſta and herſelf till the hour of dinner.

Before the end of the day, they looked

again into the library, and finding David had aſſiduouſly executed their orders, they ventured to open ſome of the books, and turned over ſome volumes of muſic, from one of which, dropped a paper. Matilda picked it up, and found it contained a few lines, written in a female hand, and which thus characteriſed the writers ſtate of mind :

O'er the mountain, that riſes fir-clad to my view,
The moon ſhews her ſilver-tipt horn ;
The moping Owl ſcreeches amid bow'ring yew,
And Philomel mourns in the thorn.

O'er the lake that ſheen ſpreads its expanſe on the lawn,
The blue miſts volumnious creep ;
From his toil on the glebe, is the ſhepherd withdrawn,
And his pallet is ſoftened by ſleep.

O'er my lute, with keen anguiſh I bend,——or deſpair ;
Its ſounds ceaſe to give me relief ;
In vain, for repoſe, to my couch, I repair,
Alas ! 'tis denied to my grief.

O'er this ſorrow-worn frame, with a lenient hand,
May the angel of death ſoon preſide ;
And my ſoul in aërial regions expand,
When from bondage releaſed, it ſhall glide.

O'er

O'er my grave, may the peaſants in ſympathy weep,
When my tale ſad in woe ſhall be told;
'Twill ſoothe my ſad ſprite, while beneath, my form ſleeps,
That their arms ſhall my urn oft enfold.

The ſimple pathos with which Matilda read this aloud, had much effect on the quick ſenſibility of Auguſta; but without any idea of the writer, the lines were depoſited in a pocket-book, and ſoon forgotten.

The day cloſed without any alteration of weather; but the ſiſters began to imagine the Tower would in time appear leſs deſolate and gloomy to them: for the library had already ſoftened half its horrors, and the attention of their ſervants imparted a gleam of comfort, which ſeemed to illuminate the dreary habitation.

CHAP. IV.

THE ſecond morning was occupied in examining the upper rooms, which, owing to neglect, were in much worſe repair than thoſe below. The damps had entirely ſpoilt ſome of the furniture, particularly the tapeſtries, which, now faded, and mildewed, but partially exhibited the uncouth forms, that once conſtituted their beauties.

The

The great gallery was hung on each ſide with portraits, intermixed with a few hiſtorical pieces; but the windows being placed at each end near the wings, gave the middle the moſt gloomy appearance.

A door at the eaſtern extremity of the gallery, was locked and the key gone. The ſiſters who had found ſeveral things in the other rooms to gratify their curioſity, were ſomewhat anxious to explore this wing, and calling one of the maids, deſired her to aſk for the key. She returned with an anſwer, that it was loſt, for the rooms had been ſhut up a long time.

Matilda enquired for what reaſon. The maid could not tell; but promiſed to ſend old Mary, who undoubtedly knew.

She came, but the ſiſters who before had heard but little ſpecimen of the Welch dialect; with difficulty underſtood her. She turned her head away, and taking up the corner of her apron, ſaid, the rooms

had no furniture, and therefore were never uſed; but added, if they wiſhed to ſee them, ſhe would call Humphry.

She waited not for their anſwer, but retired ſlowly; and Matilda who wiſhed to learn ſomething further of the extent of the Tower, deſcended into the hall.

In a ſhort time, a tall figure appeared at the end of a long paſſage, leading to the ſervants apartments, and Matilda recollected the face ſhe had ſeen on the night of their arrival; it had now an expreſſion in it, that made her repent ſuffering his wife to ſend him; but ſhe endeavoured to baniſh the ſenſation ſhe could but term a weakneſs, and aſked him how many rooms there were ſhut up.

"Four, my lady," anſwered the man, in a tone that almoſt made the ſiſters ſtart.

"Are they large?" aſked Matilda.

"I believe

" I believe they are ;---Yes, I remember they are large, but I have not ſeen them for ſeveral years."

" And whither leads that gloomy paſſage ?" ſaid Matilda, pointing to the door they had opened on the preceding day ; " I perceive it is in the ſame direction with the door above."

" It leads to the Chapel."

" Chapel !" repeated Auguſta.

" Yes, which the rooms ſhut up, are directly over."

Matilda thanked Humphry, who touched his hat, and walked away.

The ſiſters commented on the abruptneſs of his manner, and having finiſhed their examination, entered the library, where they began to arrange their painting materials, and returned with avidity to their accuſtomed amuſements.

In

In the evening, croſſing the hall to the weſt parlour, they ſaw ſome packages ſtanding in one of the corners. They called a ſervant, and enquired what they were. The maid anſwered, it was ſomething, lord Arthurine had ſent, and ſaid ſhe would call David to unpack it.

David obeyed the ſummons with alacrity, happy to employ himſelf in any thing, which might give him an opportunity of ſhewing the ladies, his activity in their ſervice.

The packages were found to contain ſome wine, a large quantity of implements for drawing, ſome new muſic, and ſeveral other little conveniences, not to be procured at Ruthyne.

This firſt inſtance of their father's remembrance, threw a ſoft complacency over their minds; and Martha, who was preſent, ventured to thank heaven, that this arrival ſerved to ſhew them, there were

other

other human beings in the world beſide thoſe who inhabited Ruthyne.

It was not long before ſome more favorable weather, tempted them to view the outſide of the Tower ; but the ſtill chearleſs ſeaſon, precluded their prolonging their walks further than to the margin of the lake, whoſe beauties Matilda anticipated, when ſummer ſhould reſtore the ſurrounding ſcenery to its accuſtomed livelineſs.

The Tower gradually loſt a part of its gloom, and even Auguſta began to reliſh the calm days they ſpent, when every hour was marked by occupation, and that occupation came in the form of amuſement.

The long evenings wore inſenſibly away, in the beauties of the Italian poets, with whoſe numbers the library was plentifully ſtored ; and they found that however the counteſs's intentions might be, to

rob

rob them of the comforts of ſociety, ſhe had rendered them an eſſential ſervice, by placing them in a ſituation, where every talent acquired improvement, and every natural and noble taſte, was ſtrengthened and refined.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

I could a tale unfold, whoſe lighteſt word,
Would harrow up thy ſoul.

SHAKESPEARE.

WINTER at length gave place to the milder ſeaſon, and the landſcape that when the ſiſters firſt arrived, terrified them with its dreary aſpect, now began to ſoften its rugged features, in the ſmiles of ſpring.

One fine afternoon inducing them to ramble in the romantic extent of the foreſt, whoſe beauties were now daily unfolding: the mildneſs of the air, tempted them to ſtray

ſtray into its inmoſt receſſes ; till coming to an accidental opening, the faint rays of the departing ſun lightly tinging the horizon, reminded them of their diſtance from Ruthyne.

They turned, and were purſuing their way back, when two foot-paths preſented themſelves. As they apparently led the ſame way, they without difficulty made a choice, and continued their progreſs, until the gentle murmurs of a ſmall ſtream, which they had not before paſſed, convinced them they had miſtaken the way, and that they had been imprudent in venturing thus far without an attendant.

After a ſhort conſultation, they agreed ſtill to purſue the well-trodden path, convinced it muſt lead them to ſome cottage, where they might procure a guide to conduct them home.

The calmneſs of the evening extended its power over their ſpirits, and led them

to reflections on the enjoyment of a life, free from noiſe and pomp, and the tranquillity that is obſervable on the faces of thoſe, who either from neceſſity, or choice, ſpend their lives far from the fluttering diſſipation, that ſpreads its wings in the manſions of the great. They felt the ſuperiority of their preſent ſituation to that at Arthurine, and Matilda ſincerely congratulated her ſiſter and herſelf on the beneficial change. Auguſta, ſaid ſhe was perfectly happy, but a ſuppreſſed ſigh declared, ſhe had not forgot the gaiety ſhe loved.

Their moralizations were ſtopped, by arriving at a ruſtic bridge, ſimply formed by the trunk of a tree, with a few of the overhanging branches entwined to aſſiſt the weary, and guide the tottering ſteps of age. Here, the ſiſters as by mutual agreement, ſtopped, and broke forth at the ſame moment, in an exclamation of rapture, at the beauty of the ſcene.

No ſound was heard but the ſoft gurgling of

of the ſtream, that extended far before them, and which, at irregular diſtances, (occaſioned by the over-hanging thicket,) reflected, with additional ſplendor, the brightneſs of the riſing moon. Tall trees at length, hid the rivulet from the view, and beyond, was the gloom of evening, ſettled on the thick branches of the foreſt.

Auguſta was fancifully embelliſhing the ſcene, with ruins and temples of her own imagination, when they were alarmed by a ſudden ruſhing, and a violent plunge into the water; and before they were ſufficiently recovered to aſcertain the cauſe, their fears were encreaſed by ſlow footſteps, and upon turning their heads towards the place from whence the ſound proceeded, they obſerved emerging from the gloom of the wood, a tall figure, which continued advancing, till it came to the bridge; when, ſeeing two elegant forms habited in white, ſtepped back a few paces, and remained for a moment in an attitude of aſtoniſhment.

The ſiſters were fearfully retiring, without

but taking their eyes from off the man, when he ſeemed to recover, and ſaid, "Ladies, it muſt be owing to ſome accident that you are found here at ſo late an hour!---Permit me to offer my ſervices."

The tone of his voice abated their fears; ---it ſeemed ſoftened by misfortune, and it thrilled through their whole frames.

"We are much obliged to you ſir," ſaid Matilda "I am rather afraid we have miſtaken our way. If you will pleaſe to direct us, we will occaſion you no further trouble."

The ſtranger was now upon the bridge, and Auguſta enquired, how far Ruthyne Tower was diſtant.

"Ruthyne!" repeated he, ſtopping, and at the ſame time, catching hold of a projecting bough, "Ruthyne,---but pray, madam, why do you enquire?---"

"I hope, ſir," ſaid Matilda, "we are not far from thence, as we live there."

He returned not an anſwer, but with a ſlow and ſteady pace, croſſed the bridge, and continued on; but preſently turning, as if recollecting himſelf, he ſaw the terrified ſiſters, ſtanding cloſe to each other, ſome diſtance behind him,

He came back, and with a reſpectful air, raiſed his hat, apoligizing for his inattention; and added, that he would, if they pleaſed, conduct them. His manner and voice again calmed their apprehenſions, and they committed themſelves to his guidance.

"I am much ſurpriſed, ladies," ſaid he, "at your being out ſo late; but I imagine it is accidental."

"Yes, ſir," ſaid Matilda, "it is accidental; we were purſuing the path in which you found us, in order to get to ſome cottage,

tage, where we might have been directed, or attended home."

"I am ſingularly fortunate in my ramble this evening, for had we not met, you in all probability would have experienced much difficulty in finding a habitation, and beſides, were ſtraying in a different direction from the Tower."

"We certainly feel ourſelves much obliged to you, ſir," ſaid Auguſta, who began to recover from her terror, "but your dog very much alarmed us, by jumping ſuddenly into the water cloſe by the bridge."

"I am afraid, I alſo contributed to augment your fears?"

"We were admiring the beauty of the evening, and the effect of the moon upon the water, when we firſt heard you," ſaid Matilda, not noticing his obſervation, "but ſure we are not far from Ruthyne? Do I

not ſee one of the mountains, that riſe beſide the lake ?"

" Pardon me," ſaid the ſtranger, " this country is ſo full of theſe ſteeps, it is impoſſible to diſtinguiſh them from each other, unleſs by a habit of obſerving them frequently."

He continued to converſe of the ſurrounding country, in a manner that beſpoke him well acquainted with it, and to have a true reliſh for its romantic beauties ; for the energy with which he deſcribed, indicated his feelings ; and his modulated tone, ſpoke home to the ſiſters hearts, with irreſiſtible force.

Upon quitting the wood, the lofty Tower of Ruthyne, riſing amid turrets and embattled walls, with one ſide ſtrongly illumined by the moon, preſented at once a grand and gloomy picture.

They

They ſoon arrived at the portal, the knocking at which, reſounded in the ſpacious hall, and broke the awful ſtillneſs that reigned within. The door was no ſooner opened by David, attended by the ladies' maids, than the ſtranger, in the moſt reſpectfully polite manner, bowed, and wiſhing them good night, retired, without waiting to receive their acknowledgements.

Martha was diffuſe in expreſſing her fears for their ſafety, and her extreme joy that they were returned.

"For" ſaid ſhe, "had we loſt our ladies, we ſhould have been afraid indeed !---Not one of us, then, ſhould have thought ourſelves ſafe a moment."

Matilda ſmiled at her ſimplicity, and affection, and retired with her ſiſter to the weſt parlour.

Auguſta was the firſt who ſtarted a remark on their conductor.

" What do you think of this ſtranger, Matilda?---Did you obſerve his noble air?"

" It was too dark for me to ſee much of his perſon, but I am pleaſed with his manner."

" It is ſomewhat like your own, Matilda---You are not quite ſo melancholy, but you are always penſive."

The converſation dropped for a few minutes, when Auguſta ſuddenly reſumed:

" I cannot imagine whence ariſes the extreme difference of our diſpoſitions."

" Extreme difference!--how extreme?"

" Why, liſten.---What makes you ſad, makes me weep; what makes me ſhudder, you look on with calmneſs; when you ſmile, I am perhaps in a high laugh; and when you are in ſorrow, you can moralize, and turn your grief into the improvement of your

your mind; but if I am melancholy, I can neither ſpeak or think."

Matilda ſmiled, at her wild ſiſter; but bade her always preſerve that happy elaſticity of ſpirits, which would render her own life chearful, and delight every one about her.

CHAP. VI.

A thouſand phantaſies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling ſhapes, and beck'ning ſhadows dire;
And airy tongues that ſyllable mens names
On ſands, and ſhores, and deſart wilderneſſes.

MILTON.

THE next day, Matilda imagined, as ſhe looked over the lawn, that a few alterations might be made in the grounds, calculated to ſoften the rugged aſpect of the Tower. She called David, and conſulting with him on the occaſion; was pleaſed to find him endowed with ſtrong natural abilities, which the narrowneſs of his education had not been able

able to repreſs. The advice which Matilda requeſted, he gave in a timid, yet diſtinct manner; and it was agreed, that the avenue in the foreſt, which was over-grown with underwood and buſhes, ſhould be cleared, and reſtored to its original ſtate; the court of the Tower alſo ſtripped of the long graſs, and lank weeds, that hung on its walks, and the rubbiſh that lay ſcattered on ſome part of the lawn, removed; which would give an air of neatneſs to the place, and render it far more comfortable.

The ſaloon, too, Matilda thought, might be rendered a pleaſant ſitting room, as it did not altogether partake of that deſolate appearance, the others bore. She determined to procure an aſſiſtant from the market-town, and have the tapeſtry covered with hanging of a more modern date; the chairs and ſofas with linen; and to add ſome ornaments of her own, and her ſiſters work, purpoſing, at the ſame time, to adorn it with ſome drawings, which they immediately ſat about executing.

Occupied

Occupied in theſe intended improvements, the ſtranger who had conducted them home, was almoſt forgotten; till, the third morning after the adventure, David announced him, by the name of Aubincourt.

The ſiſters were in the library, with a table covered with papers and materials for painting. Mr. Aubincourt reſpectfully enquired after their health, and ſlightly mentioned an acquaintance with the earl, their father.

Surpriſed, at meeting two ſuch lovely girls in that ſecluſion, he had made enquiries in the neighbourhood; and was yet more ſo, when he found they were the daughters of lord Arthurine.

If the ſiſters were pleaſed with him before, they were charmed with him now they had an opportunity of remarking his perſon and air. He appeared about thirty, and his figure might be ranked among the firſt; his air was intereſting, and there was a pe-

a peculiar penſiveneſs in his countenance, that ſoftened his features, and rendered him perfectly handſome.

Auguſta, was ſurpriſed, at ſeeing him regard Matilda in a pauſe of the converſation, with conſiderable earneſtneſs; and, on taking his eyes off, ſigh heavily; but her attention was ſoon diverted, by his ſaying, he had an aunt, whom he ſhould be happy to introduce to them; adding, that ſhe reſided with him at a ſmall villa, about a mile and a half diſtant from the Tower.

Matilda expreſſed her obligation to him, for thus opening a way to break the ſolitude of their ſituation, and begged to ſee Mrs. Laurie at an early day. He promiſed, in her name, ſhe ſhould come; and after having ſtaid about three quarters of an hour, took his leave.

Mr. Aubincourt was too intereſting in his perſon and manners, not to occaſion a few remarks from the ſiſters, after his departure;

parture ; and Auguſta, with her accuſtomed livelineſs, began to figure to herſelf, the perſon and character of his aunt ; while they both earneſtly anticipated the pleaſure they ſhould receive, from the acquiſition of an agreeable friend.

They had juſt riſen from their dinner, when a meſſenger arrived from lord Arthurine, who delivered Matilda a letter ; and ſaid his lordſhip purpoſed, ſoon viſiting the Tower, with his lady, and a few ſelect friends, who were then at Arthurine.

The letter, more particularly expreſſed this intention being on account of lady Arthurine, who had been ſome months in London ; and the conſtant routine of viſits ſhe was obliged to keep up, had overfatigued her, and it was feared, had given her a ſlight nervous fever.

The earl ſtated, that he would ſend ſome domeſtics in four days time, to make preparations.

Three

Three days after this, Mr. Aubincourt introduced his aunt to the ſiſters; and mutual eſteem, ſucceeded mutual admiration. Mrs. Laurie's air was calm, and her manners gentle; but while ſhe appeared the moſt domeſtic and feminine character, her converſation ſometimes diſplayed the energetic caſt of mind ſo conſpicuous in Aubincourt, joined with ſenſe and candour almoſt maſculine.

The afternoon paſſed rapidly away. The cloud that hung on Mr. Aubincourt's countenance, ſeemed gradually wearing off, and not unfrequently did the ſprightly ſallies of Auguſta diſpel it quite; but if his eye, by accident, caught Matilda's form, it returned inſtantaneouſly to the ſame melancholy expreſſion.

The genuine elegance of Mrs. Laurie's manner, made Matilda eagerly embrace her offer of friendſhip, and a continuance of viſits. She excuſed her ſiſter and ſelf from walking to the villa for ſome little time,

on

on account of a few domeſtic arrangements; begging, *that* might not hinder Mrs. Laurie from again viſiting the Tower.

The ſervants of the earl, arriving at the ſpecified time, with ſeveral conveniences, Ruthyne did not afford; Matilda and Auguſta were buſily employed in rendering every room as comfortable as poſſible, (particularly the ſaloon) in order, that their father might receive ſome little favorable impreſſion of their attention to his eaſe.

All the chambers, in the body of the Tower, they reſolved to appropriate to the uſe of lord Arthurine and his gueſts; and Matilda, who ſaw no reaſon why a ſuite of rooms ſhould be ſhut up, when there was abſolute occaſion for them, ſent for Humphry into the weſt parlour, and begged he would get thoſe of the eaſt wing opened, which ſhe intended to occupy.

The man looked at her a moment, as if he doubted the reality of her intentions, and

and then muttered, they were out of repair.

"More ſo, than the other rooms?"

"Long neglect may be ſuppoſed to render them ſo," ſaid he, rather impatiently.

"Be that as it will," ſaid Matilda, "I ſhould be glad to have the key, Humphry, when you can find it."

He turned away, and in leſs than an hour ſent her a key, with which David ſoon opened the door of the firſt chamber in the eaſt wing.

It was entirely dark, but after much difficulty, David admitted the light, by pulling down a ſhutter from the window, which looked out to the back part of the Tower.

Matilda ſent David to call Martha. She returned with him as far as the door, but ſeeing

ſeeing whither he was entering, ſhe ſtarted back, exclaiming, " are you mad?"

" What is the matter?" aſked David, with much amazement.

" Do you think," cried Martha " I would ſet my foot within that room!--No; if it was filled with gold, I would not come near it."

" What is the meaning of this?" ſaid Auguſta, who as well as her ſiſter, had not been ſeen by Martha.

" What are you there, my dear ladies? Oh for the love of heaven, come out; pray come out."

" What do you mean?" cried Matilda.

" Mean! my lady! Why the room is haunted to be ſure!"

Matilda gravely reprimanded the maid for

for giving way to ſuch ſilly imaginations, and begged, that if ſhe was afraid to enter the room, ſhe would ſend one of the other ſervants, to put it in order.

"What! not come in when you are there?" ſaid Martha, forgetting her former declaration, "yes, my lady, I can do that --but will you ſtay with me?"

"Yes," cried Matilda, "ſet your heart at reſt, we will not leave you; but let me hear no more of haunted rooms."

"I wiſh I heard nothing of them my lady."

Auguſta had a ſtrong deſire to queſtion the maid, concerning her hints, but ſhe felt that it would be ridiculous, and ſuppreſſed her curioſity.

"What is here?" ſaid Matilda, puſhing open a door that ſtood ajar, and which ſhewed her another room not quite ſo large as the firſt, that appeared to have been uſed for a cloſet or

dreſſing room. She ſtaid not to examine it, but returned to the other, where Martha, pale and trembling, was endeavouring to execute her orders.

Theſe rooms were not ſo bad as Humphry had repreſented to Matilda. The furniture, indeed, was covered with duſt, and the hangings of the beds were faded, and decaying; but the ſiſters imagined they could ſleep in them very comfortably; and Martha, in deſcending, reluctantly owned to her fellow ſervants, that ſhe had ſeen no *ſpirits*.

The other two rooms, as they were not immediately wanted, Matilda would not take the trouble to explore, for in ſpite of her ſuperior underſtanding, the ſimple terrors of Martha, dwelt on her mind, and the gloom of theſe chambers heightened certain ſenſations, which in reality, almoſt amounted to fear.

Auguſta was avowedly of opinion that the

the maid might be right, which determined Matilda to queſtion Martha reſpecting her exclamations. She ſent for her, and begged to know why ſhe thought the room haunted.

" Becauſe, my lady," ſaid Martha, " all ſuch old places as this are."

" Is that your only reaſon, Martha?"

" No my lady;---I never knew rooms like theſe, ſhut up for nothing. I have often heard ſuch things of rooms, that have been long ſhut up, that I could not mention them in the night time, if you would give me the world;--beſide, old Humphry and his wife are always talking together ſo ſlily, that nobody knows what they ſay."

" Is this all?" ſaid Auguſta, ſomewhat diſappointed.

" No, my lady," ſaid Martha, heſitating, " but I cannot remember any thing elſe

now; only I know all rooms that have been ſhut up long, muſt be haunted, elſe why ſhould they be ſhut up?"

Matilda diſmiſſed Martha, begging ſhe would no more give ear to what had really no exiſtence, and endeavoured to convince her, that ſuch things were only believed by extremely weak, or ignorant people.

"My Auguſta," ſaid Matilda, when Martha was gone, "do you not now ſee, how, very far, ſuperſtition and prejudice will carry a perſon; it was not ſo much for my own ſatisfaction as your's, that I queſtioned Martha. I was well aſſured, your reaſon would ſhew you how weak her arguments in ſupport of her opinion, and how fallacious all attempts to convince us of the truth of her former aſſertions, were."

Auguſta ſmiled at the recollection of her ſimplicity, and promiſed to think of haunted chambers no more.

The moſt part of the arrangements being made, the ſiſters ſeparated, to purſue their reſpective amuſements; the ſetting ſun throwing a rich glow over the landſcape ſeen from the library window, tempting Auguſta to begin a ſketch of it; and the beauty of the evening inviting Matilda to walk.

"Perhaps you will join me Auguſta," ſaid ſhe, "when you can no longer ſee to draw. I ſhall not venture out of the avenue in the foreſt. Will you come?"

"Moſt aſſuredly," ſaid Auguſta; and Matilda began her ſtroll on the margin of the lake, whoſe boſom unruffled by the ſlighteſt breath of air, caught all the gay colours that floated in the ſky, and ſoftened every feature of the foliage, that ſhewed its inverted picture on the oppoſite ſide. Matilda walked afterwards a conſiderable way up the avenue, and retnrned without ſeeing Auguſta.

She will not come now, thought ſhe; and walking up to the chapel, looked through one of its ſhattered windows. The numerous pillars admitted the evening light with reluctance, and on their heights ſat all the ſolemnity, Gothic architecture, and religious gloom could unite.

Matilda was tempted to enter, by one of thoſe impulſes that ſo often actuate the mind.

The door was open, but the entrance was overgrown with various weeds, and it was with ſome difficulty that ſhe got to the principal aiſle, which was equally grand and gloomy. The retiring arcade lighted dimly by a large painted window, that ſoftened or rather blunted the laſt rays of evening, filled her mind with awe, and threw a penſive complacence over her ſpirits.

She continued to pace the aiſle, regardleſs of the hour which was growing late, till ſudden footſteps ſtartled her.

" Ah!

" Ah! exclaimed ſhe, it is Auguſta coming to ſearch for me; I have alarmed her."

She haſtened to the ſpot, from whence the ſteps ſounded, but they took another direction, and died away.

Matilda was now in a dark part of the chapel, and almoſt bewildered among the pillars and their deep ſhadows, when foot-ſteps haſtily advanced again, but totally unlike the former, for they were heavy, and ſounded like thoſe of a man.

A deep rough voice ſaluted her, and ſhe involuntarily retired farther among the pillars; but the perſon followed her, and exclaimed in an angry tone, " Lady how came you here?"

" Who aſks that queſtion?" ſaid Matilda, with firmneſs.

A ſilence of ſome moments enſued. Ma-

tilda could juſt diſcern a tall figure, but could not recognize the perſon.

" Do you know, lady, what danger you run by walking here ?"

" Who is it," cried Matilda, " that is ſo careful ?"

" It is Humphry, pleaſe your ladyſhip," ſaid the man, ſurlily.

" What danger can there be here, Humphry ?"

" The place is damp and cold."

" Moſt true ;" ſaid Matilda mildly, " I thank you for your caution :---but is that all ?"

" What elſe do you expect lady ?" ſaid he, rather fiercely.

" What ſhould I expect ?"

" You

"You do not then believe the things that are ſaid of this place?"

"I have heard nothing concerning it!"

"Good night, my lady," ſaid the man turning away; and Matilda, impreſſed with the moſt unaccountable ſenſations, involuntarily followed him.

"Humphry," exclaimed ſhe, "will you ſhew me the way out, I believe, I ſhall not eaſily find it."

He turned again, and pointing to a ſtill more remote part of the chapel, led the way thither. Matilda followed, till they came to a place ſo dark, that Humphry was obliged to grope along by the pillars, and Matilda fearfully demanded if that was the way out of the chapel.

He returned no anſwer, but kept on till he laid his hand on a door, which he with difficulty opened.

"This

"This cannot be the way," cried Matilda, "Whither are we going, Humphry?"

He walked up a long paſſage, Matilda ſtill following; till he opened another door, and the balluſtrade of the ſtair-caſe in the hall, caught her ſight, ſhe was inſtantaneouſly relieved from ſome very diſagreeable ſenſations; and turned to thank Humphry for his care. She imagined his face bore an expreſſion more doubtful, than ever ſhe had witneſſed in it before. A ghaſtly ſmile was ſpreading itſelf over his harſh features, which immediately ſhrunk back to their uſual ſternneſs, when he found ſhe obſerved him.

"What is this man?" exclaimed ſhe, mentally, as he retired. There is no telling to what imaginations the queſtion would have led her, had ſhe not opened the door of the library, and found Auguſta ſtill ſitting over her drawing.

"Have

"Have you not been in the chapel, Auguſta?" cried ſhe.

"Can you aſk ſuch a queſtion, Matilda?"

Matilda ſmiled; "I have been there myſelf!"

"Indeed!" "Yes, and why are you ſo afraid of the chapel?"

"I do not know; there is an indefinable ſomething in ruinous places, eſpecially thoſe of the religious order, that ſtrikes me with terror; and this chapel in particular."

"Why in particular?" ſaid Matilda anxiouſly, for the words of Humphry had made her curious.

"Nay, I cannot tell," returned Auguſta, and the converſation dropped.

The time fixed for the earl's arrival, was yet

yet fourteen days diſtant, when Aubincourt and his aunt one morning called at the Tower. The former being on one of his rambles, had brought Mrs. Laurie to ſpend the day with the ſiſters, promiſing to call for her again in the evening.

Matilda now mentioned the expected viſit, and expreſſed her hopes that it would not deprive them of the ſight of Mrs. Laurie. She anſwered, that however unpleaſant it might be to her to be kept from them, her averſion to gaiety was too great, to ſuffer her to mix with the company, lady Arthurine would certainly draw around her.

"But," added ſhe, "I expect to be recompenced by ſometimes ſeeing you in that time, at the villa. When you can ſteal from the amuſements that will then court your moments, come and ſpend a ſerious hour with me."

The ſiſters gave her their chearful promiſe, and the day glided away on the wings of friendſhip.

When

When Aubincourt returned, he partook of a light ſupper with them, and ſoon after departed with his aunt.

The intervening days till the earl was expected, were ſpent in ornamenting the ſaloon, which now, in point of elegance, was far ſuperior to any room in the Tower; that in which the earl left them on the night of their arrival, was alſo new furniſhed for the dreſſing room of lady Arthurine.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

WHILE theſe preparations were making at Ruthyne, the earl and counteſs (notwithſtanding the ill health of the latter,) continued the gaiety and ſplendor at Arthurine, which had never ceaſed ſince the journey to London, from whence ſeveral families had accompanied them.

The houſe was ſtill full of viſitors, ſome of whom contributed to lady Arthurine's pleaſure, and ſome to her amuſement; for ſhe had that dangerous turn of ſatire, that alights

alights indiſcriminately on the follies of mankind, and the imperfections of nature.

The moſt remarkable character then at Arthurine, was ſir John Rattle, (whom her ladyſhip uſed familiarly to call Jack,) a young man, whoſe ſudden acquiſition of a fortune and title, by the death of an uncle, had given ſuch a flow of ſpirits, that he was generally in all kinds of miſchief, that bore any reſemblance to what he called fun; and with a good temper, and not a bad heart, he procured much amuſement for thoſe, who could a little reſtrain his turbulent ſpirits.

The next, was a young man not endowed with common ſenſe by nature, and rendered effeminate and ridiculous by the ill-timed indulgence of an over fond mother. Mr. Wilmot furniſhed ample ſport for Rattle, and was almoſt the only one in the company, at whom lady Arthurine dared openly to level her wit; the other characters being more reſpectable, ſhe ſtood rather in awe of retalliation.

Sir

Sir Archibald Marnonville's family conſiſted of himſelf, his lady, a ſon and a daughter. The two firſt were a pair of thoſe mechanical beings, who act their parts juſt as they are given them, without the leaſt variation in their conduct, but ſuch as the different tempers of the company they aſſociated with, gave them; good eating and ſound ſleeping, being looked on as the chief good of life; a card table its pleaſure; and a regular attendance on public worſhip, its chriſtianity.

Mr. Marnonville was a fine young man, agreeable in his manner and unexceptionable in point of ſenſe and morals; but his ſiſter, notwithſtanding his care and anxiety for her, was ſpoiled by an unlimited range in the fields of fiction---in the moſt abſurd romances a circulating library afforded. Encouraged in this by the weak lady Marnonville, the repeated remonſtrances of her brother had no other effect than to weaken her affections for him, and he had the misfortune

to

to find that while he was loſing a ſenſible friend, his ſiſter was loſt alſo.

Lord Waldemar, was in many reſpects the counter-part of Mr. Marnonville.--- With a much finer perſon, and an eſtate of 10,000l. *per ann.* he poſſeſſed all the virtues of the former, with whom he ſoon formed an intimacy.

The count De Laſſon was the laſt of the number invited to accompany the earl and counteſs to Ruthyne, to break the chearleſs time the latter expected to ſpend there.

Auguſtine De Laſſon, was a Frenchman by birth; but, from a predilection of his father's in favour of England, he was educated here; and, for ſome reaſon, choſe to ſpend his life among people, to whoſe manners he had been accuſtomed.

He had married a relation of the earl's, who died in a ſhort time; and ſince, had given the reins to his inclinations, which

led him into all manner of diſſipation. The company of the earl, with whom he was inſeparable, far from reſtraining any part of his conduct, often heightened his exceſſes, by his being made a partaker in them.

Matilda and Auguſta had always a diſlike to this man; yet they could not define the ſentiment, but were obliged to place it to the account of prejudice; for the count, though he wore an air of haughtineſs and pride, was a fine figure, and a well-bred man.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Let the ſtricken deer go weep.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN the morning arrived, on which the party was expected at Ruthyne, Auguſta, in the higheſt ſpirits, could not help aſking Matilda why ſhe was ſo penſive?

"You, I perceive, are rejoiced, Auguſta."

" Moſt certainly; what a delightfu change this will make in our amuſements!"

" But do you expect, my Auguſta, they are all agreeable people that are coming?"

" No, certainly;---but yet I think it will be pleaſant for us."

" I conſider," ſaid Matilda, with a ſigh, " how much it will diſturb our tranquillity, and how long we ſhall be kept from our favourite amuſements."

The arrival of the earl ſoon ſtopped the diſcuſſion, and he preſſed them both in his arms with more apparent affection, than ever he had done ſince their birth.

Lady Arthurine, pale and fatigued, entered the weſt parlour, leaning on the arm of lord Waldemar; and, caſting a contemptuous glance at the furniture, declared this

this journey was but little calculated to reſtore her health.

When the party was ſeated, ſhe indulged her ſpleen, by ill-natured remarks on every thing around her, eſpecially the *horrid Welch ſcenery*, that appeared through the narrow Gothic windows.

The count endeavoured to court the attention of Auguſta; and Frampton, (who always attended his mother, to the great hindrance of his education), threw himſelf on the floor, at the feet of Matilda, and teazed her with a thouſand impertinent queſtions.

Rattle was out of his element.---Admiration of Matilda kept him ſilent; for her manner awed him, and he durſt not, however deſirous, approach to converſe with her. Wilmot, on the contrary, ſeemed to draw confidence from her looks, and would have attempted to ſpeak to her, had not

lord Frampton baffled him, by engroſſing all her attention.

Wearied, at length, with his nonſenſe, Matilda ſaw the count approach, with pleaſure. He, with an eaſe peculiar to himſelf, diſplaced Frampton, ſaying, "You muſt not, my lord, have all your fair ſiſter's converſation the firſt hour! I claim a part of it; therefore, pray go, and endeavour to amuſe lady Arthurine."

He then leaned over the back of her chair, and queſtioned her on her health, and other indifferent matters.

"Pray, my lord," ſaid ſir Archibald to the earl, in the courſe of the converſation, "from which of your anceſtors do you inherit this Tower? I think I remember moſt of their names, but never heard of one that inhabited this ſolitary place."

"Solitary indeed," cried lady Arthurine, "it

" it is more fit for a mauſoleum, than an abode for beings of this world !"

" And yet, oh ! unfeeling woman," thought Auguſta, " you could bury us here without remorſe !"

" Oh, my lady !" exclaimed miſs Marnonville, who had hitherto been ſilent, " it is a moſt enchanting place, ſo gloomy and romantic, that"——

" It exactly ſuits your falſe taſte," cried her brother, and for the moment ſilenced her.

Sir Archibald repeated his queſtion.

" It came to me by an uncle," ſaid the earl haſtily ; and the count, who had but the moment before, been in earneſt converſation with Matilda, ſuddenly ſtopped.

" An uncle !" ſaid ſir Archibald ; " was it the lord Arthurine ?

"No," ſaid the earl, rather ſhortly, "it was an Italian nobleman, an uncle by my mother's ſide."

"An Italian nobleman!" repeated the romantic miſs Marnonville---Ah! this Tower has, no doubt, been remarkable for memorable ſcenes."

The count ſtarted from a reverie; and the earl turned full upon her, as if to ſpeak, but, recollecting himſelf, endeavoured to change the ſubject, which ſir Archibald had not yet done with.

"Oh, now I remember," cried he, after muſing a little, "he lived here rather in a ſtrange manner, did he not, my lord?---melancholy---a little deranged, or ſo---count Del Fiori was his name, I think."

The earl roſe from his ſeat, and walked to the window, while miſs Marnonville was connecting the idea of this Italian count, with all that was perfectly romantic; and

and could not avoid giving her ſentiments utterance, notwithſtanding the ſignificant looks darted at her by her brother.

" He had been diſappointed, perhaps, in ſome unfortunate attachment," exclaimed ſhe, " and that cauſed him to ſequeſter himſelf thus :---or ſome dear friend had left him to wander in yonder foreſt by himſelf.---Ah ! I ſee him in idea."

The earl turned round, on this ſpeech, with a look ſo angry, that the ſiſters trembled for the conſequence ; and, ſtopping her ſhort, he exclaimed, " And how came you, miſs Marnonville, ſo well acquainted with the feelings of my uncle !"

" Me, my lord !" cried ſhe, with ſome confuſion, " I never heard his name before ! I was only imagining what might have been his fate, and how a ſuſceptible mind would have borne it."

" Your imagination carries you much too

too far---my uncle's taſte for ſolitude was not occaſioned by love!"

This was ſpoken in a contemptuous tone, and the young lady, for ſome time, was effectually ſilenced.

Matilda could not help giving her ſiſter a look, the ſignificance of which, Auguſta fully comprehended, and repeating to herſelf, "Are theſe the people who will diverſify our amuſements?"---Felt ſorry ſhe had ever indulged the idea.

In the diſpoſition of the party at the hour of dinner, Mr. Marnonville was placed next Matilda, and lord Waldemar oppoſite, by the ſide of the ſentimentally-affected miſs Marnonville. But if this was a mortification, he was gratified by the contemplation of two the moſt perfect forms he had ever beheld, thoſe of Auguſta and Matilda.

The contraſt in their figures, rendered them

them ſtill more beautiful, when placed near each other. The airy caſt of Auguſta's deportment was faſcinating, after viewing Matilda's majeſty; and to turn to Matilda's ſoft, yet intelligent countenance, from the wild beauties of Auguſta, was repoſe to the eye, and delight to the ſoul.

Between two ſuch women, lord Waldemar thought it impoſſible to decide which was the moſt lovely, or which the moſt engaging; but he ſoon found, that Auguſta's ſmiles caught more of his attention than Matilda's expreſſion, whoſe gaiety was over-ruled by a ſoft penſiveneſs, that formed the ground of her character.

Mr. Marnonville did not miſs the opportunity of ſtarting an intereſting converſation with Matilda, whoſe delicacy of expreſſion, and ſtrength of underſtanding, charmed his judgment, as much as her beauty captivated his heart; and he turned with pity from his unhappy ſiſter, who, with a good form, and great capability of genius,

genius, had debaſed her mind with the frivolities of Romance, which likewiſe had the effect of poiſoning her peace, by the miſeries and abſurdities of ſuperſtition. The works ſhe read, turning chiefly on Roman Catholic characters, ſhe had imbibed a high idea of the beauty and pomp of that religion, and had actually taken ſome deciſive ſteps towards being one of the perſuation.

Even the dreſſes of the ſiſters marked the difference of their characters from that of miſs Marnonville; *ſhe*, tricked out with all the appendages of her favorite heroines, long veils, flowing hair, and arms encircled with pearls; *they*, dreſſed as nature and ſimplicity directed, with a ſlight attention to the faſhions of the day.

Matilda agreeably ſurpriſed her father after the hour of dinner, by conducting the company to the ſaloon, whither ſhe had conveyed ſome of the beſt hiſtorical paintings ſhe could find; and had added

a few

a few drawings of Auguſta's, and her own. Theſe, joined with lighter hangings, and ſome ornaments of a modern date, ſo entirely changed the appearance of the room, that the earl could not help aſking what had occaſioned the alteration.

The moſt indifferent of fathers could not have heard, without emotion, that his daughters had thus employed themſelves for his eaſe and pleaſure; but the ill-humour of the counteſs prevented the earl from making any comments on this mark of filial reſpect.

Some of the company ſlightly examined the paintings, and diſpoſed of themſelves in different parties, at cards; but lord Waldemar and Mr. Marnonville were attentively engaged in comparing the merits of the different painters, till a drawing of Matilda's, which the reſt had not noticed, caught their eyes, and awakened other feelings.

It was a repreſentation of Painting and Poetry; the figures and drapery copied from an ancient but valuable picture, the ſiſters had found in the library; but the faces were Matilda's and Auguſta's.

The ſweet attitude of liſtening, and the eager attention, depictured in her countenance, exactly ſuited the expreſſion of Auguſta, in the character of Painting; but the ſtriking form of Matilda, bending over her ſiſter, her eyes a little raiſed, and the ſmile of inſpiration ſoftening her penſive features, characterized Poetry in its moſt enthuſiaſtic flight of ſublimity.

Whatever defects Matilda's want of knowledge in the art might have left in her drawing, the taſte of diſpoſition, and expreſſion of colouring, excuſed, or rather hid them; and the gentlemen continued to gaze, without exchanging a word, till the counteſs called them to come and make up her party of cards. They lamented the ſummons in their hearts, and ſoon getting releaſed,

releaſed, lord Waldemar propoſed muſic; on which the younger part of the company withdrew to the library, where they remained till the hour of tea.

When the time of ſeparating for the night arrived, Auguſta, without knowing why, trembled at the idea of the apartment they were about to occupy.

"I could almoſt wiſh," ſaid ſhe to Matilda, on riſing from the ſupper table, "to ſtay here all night!"

"Very poſſible," ſaid Matilda, "but for my part, I ſhall prefer a bed, even in a haunted chamber!"

"Haunted!" exclaimed miſs Marnonville, eagerly catching at the laſt words, which ſhe accidentally overheard, "and is it really thought this Tower is haunted?"

"Are you afraid, madam?" ſaid Matilda, careleſsly.

"Oh,

" Oh, no; I have long wiſhed to viſit a haunted place."

" Then I hope for your comfort," cried her brother, " you may find this ſo."

Auguſta ſhuddered, but Matilda ſmiled, and they retired to their chambers.

Having gained their room, and ſeated themſelves by a gloomy fire, Auguſta endeavoured to diſſipate the unpleaſant ſenſations that aroſe on the view of the diſmal apartment, by queſtioning Matilda on her opinion of their gueſts.

Matilda gave it ſlightly, and reverted to her father's perturbation, on the mention of the Italian count.

" Oh!" cried Auguſta, " I ſuppoſe he was irritated by the romantic miſs Marnonville; but do not let us talk of any thing melancholy to-night, for I feel very uncomfortable. I could not help thinking,

the

the portraits in the gallery looked more diſmal and ſtrange, as we paſſed them, than ever they had done before."

Matilda laughed at her ſiſter's imaginations, and made an effort to renew the converſation of the gueſts; but Auguſta often caſt a timid glance to the fartheſt extent of the chamber, where ſtood the dark old-faſhioned bed; and then ſhuddered at the idea of their contiguity to the chapel.

The converſation at length inſenſibly dropped; and Auguſta often turned her head at an imaginary noiſe, in the dark part of the room.

"What do you hear?" ſaid Matilda, looking round.

"Nothing," ſaid Auguſta; "I believe it was only fancy."

"The room is in very bad repair," cried

Matilda; " you hear the wind in the wainſcot."

" But is it that waves the bed-curtains? Look, Matilda!---What can that be?"

Before Matilda could credit her ſenſes, ſomething darted acroſs the room, and extinguiſhed the light.

Auguſta dropped from her ſeat, and a profound ſilence enſued.

The fire was not out, but the glimmering embers only ſerved to render a ſmall white figure viſible, which was flitting to and fro, in the farther part of the chamber. At length, it reſted on the bed, from whence it had firſt proceeded, and Matilda ventured to call on Auguſta, who faintly anſwered her. Being relieved from terror on her ſiſter's account, Matilda then determined to convince herſelf of the cauſe of their alarm, and, re-lighting the lamp, advanced toward the bed.

" Auguſta,"

"Auguſta," cried ſhe, "it is nothing but an owl!"

The night-bird fixed its large eyes on her, with an expreſſion that diſſipated all her fears in laughter; and while Auguſta was ſummoning courage to riſe from the floor, ſhe opened the caſement, and gave the poor bird its liberty; after which, they enjoyed undiſturbed repoſe during the night.

CHAP. IX.

And let the aſpiring youth beware of love,
Of the ſmooth glance beware; for 'tis too late,
When on his heart, the torrent, ſoftneſs pours.

THE next day, the count mentioning the romantic beauty of the country, a party was propoſed, to ſurvey it. Matilda and Auguſta, who had never yet ventured beyond the foreſt, rejoiced at the idea of being on the heights of thoſe mountains, which

which they juſtly imagined muſt overlook the ſurrounding country to a great extent.

The counteſs pleaded her ill health as an excuſe; and lady Marnonville deſired to ſtay with her as a companion. The ſiſters began to fear the excurſion would be laid aſide, eſpecially when miſs Marnonville's pallid looks were diſcuſſed, and ſhe was entreated by her mother not to think of riding out. But the earl, who, for ſome unknown reaſons, was in extreme good humour with his daughters, declared he would be one of the party himſelf, that they might enjoy a view of the ſcenery amid which he had placed them.

Horſes were accordingly prepared, and, with the count, ſir John Rattle, lord Waldemar, and Mr. Marnonville, they chearfully ſat out, leaving Mr. Wilmot to take care, and be taken care of, by the other ladies.

Mr. Marnonville rode his horſe cloſe to

that of Matilda, and endeavoured to keep her in an intereſting converſation he had ſtarted; but ſir John Rattle, who began to loſe his timidity, was on the other ſide, as much employed in pointing out to her notice the different beauties of buildings, which, as they aſcended one of the mountains, began to appear. To neither ſhe was inattentive, but endeavoured to pay an equal ſhare of attention to both; while Auguſta was gaily chatting with lord Waldemar, who enjoyed her converſation without interruption.

The count at length ſeemed inclined to diſplace both the gentlemen who rode beſide Matilda; and, under pretence of pointing out a particular ſpot as worthy of obſervation, contrived to ſend Marnonville on before, and ſo completely engroſſed her converſation, that Rattle ſoon followed him.

For the firſt time in her life, Matilda now began to fear the count; a certain expreſſion

preſſion played over his features, that reſembled triumph; but that was ſhortly loſt in one more tender, and endeavouring to keep her back from the reſt of the party, he began artfully to compliment her beauty, at the expence of that of lady Arthurine, and execrated the cruelty, that had hid two ſuch gems from the world.

Matilda now exerted herſelf to ward off his flattery; but not being able entirely to repel it, ſhe urged on her horſe, and joined her father.

The count ſoon overtook her, but darting a look of anger, he remained entirely ſilent.

It was late, ere the party returned to the Tower, which, when they did, every one poſſeſſed with the remembrance of the beauties they had witneſſed, ſeemed inclined to give deſcriptions.

Sir John Rattle began by accoſting Matilda:

" It is a myſtery to me," cried he, " that your ladyſhip ſhould chuſe this part of the world as your reſidence; it is the ſtrangeſt place I ever got into in my life---nothing but woods, mountains, rivers and lakes, with here and there an old caſtle, like this."

" And do all the beauties of Wales go with you for nothing?" cried Marnonville; " for my own part, I ſhall quit with regret the charming ſcenes we have witneſſed this morning. Did you obſerve," added he, turning to Waldemar, " the vaſt chain of rocky mountains that roſe above a foreſt, receding to the left, till they appeared faint clouds, by the effect of the ſun, on their ſhaggy ſides?"

" You do not often find me overlook a beauty in a landſcape," cried Waldemar, " but I do not wonder at Rattle's apathy this morning, ſince no horſe ran away, no perſon wrs ridden over, nor any one incident happened, ſuited to his inclination."

Rattle

Rattle took this ſally with a good-humoured laugh, and expreſſed his wonder at their want of taſte.

" This country is charming," reſumed Marnonville, " but how much more ſo will it be, when the hand of Autumn ſhall have matured its beauties !"

" I perfectly agree with you," ſaid Matilda, " and anticipate that ſeaſon with impatience."

" Ah, charming Poetry !" cried lord Waldemar, pointing to her drawing, (they being in the ſaloon,) " thou loveſt the long deep night---the light flitting leaf, and hold thy favourite court, amid foreſts yellowing by the hand of Winter."

Matilda bluſhed; but the reſt of the company required an explanation. He gave it; and taking the drawing from its place, put it into the hands of the earl, who, in oppoſition of his counteſs---of his

want of feeling, and neglect of his daughters, dropped a tear over their countenances, ſo like his once beloved Maria Del Fiori.

The count expreſſed a wiſh to have a copy of the picture, which the earl immediately declared he ſhould; and Waldemar, as well as Marnonville, repented that ever the drawing had been mentioned.

The count would not relinquiſh his prize, but ſent it immediately to an artiſt who painted for him, deſiring no pains might be ſpared for the copy to be exact.

Matilda was hurt when ſhe found how the affair ſtood; for the count's behaviour in the ride, had diſguſted, as well as frighted her; but Marnonville, on whom her ſuperior charms had made a rapid impreſſion, felt all the mingled ſenſations of deſpair, of hate, and jealouſy.

But another cauſe of alarm ſoon drove the firſt from Matilda's remembrance. She often

often obſerved the earl and count in deep converſation, and not unfrequently leave the room together.

The younger party being now more acquainted with each other, lord Waldemar often requeſted a few hours of muſic in the library, and received an additional proof of the accompliſhments of the ſiſters, as well as their ſenſibility, from the grace with which they touched their inſtruments, and the pathos that ſwelled their voices.

Matilda and Auguſta had never ſtudied the ſcience of muſic with that attention which produces the rapid execution, or the graces ſo much admired by connoiſſeurs; but their ſimple notes touched the heart, becauſe directed by feeling, and their voices, ſtill more ſimple, ſometimes without knowledge or art, wandered from a pauſe, into a few irregular ſemi-tones, and languiſhed into the air again, with ſuch exquiſite ſweetneſs, that they not unfrequently

quently drew, from their auditors, the moſt grateful applauſe---the " tear of ſenſibility."

Even the thoughtleſs Rattle was entirely ſubdued by the melody of Matilda; and declared, that if ever a man could think of marrying, ſhe was enough to tempt him to commit the folly.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

EVERY thing would have gone on peaceably at the Tower, but for the haughty airs of lady Arthurine; who was repeatedly declaring, in the hearing of the earl, that her exiſtence was a burden to her in that dreary place, and that ſhe eagerly longed for the hour that ſhould emancipate her from the gloom, although ſhe had been there but three days.

Wearied with her diſdainful ſarcaſms, and the common-place inſipidity of ſir Archibald

Archibald and lady Marnonville, the ſiſters determined to ſteal one morning for the purpoſe of devoting it to Mrs. Laurie.

Taking David with them, they walked through the foreſt, and, after a few yards of the public road, entered a level green walk, which led, as they were informed, to the villa.

A few light pillars, belonging to a portico, ſoon appeared through the viſta of a ſhrubbery; and afterwards a white manſion, built in the Italian ſtyle, ſeated on a level lawn, where the ſhrubbery, forming an amphitheatre, ſheltered it from the eaſt and north winds.

They entered, by the portico, an open hall, of the moſt light and airy conſtruction, and were conducted to Mrs. Laurie, who ſat writing in a room appropriated to her own uſe.

She received them with the moſt ſincere ſatisfaction, and every mark of friendſhip.

" My

" My Charles," cried ſhe, " will not forgive me, if I engroſs your company: Come, let me conduct you to our parlour.

She led them through another hall, (where the various tints of Raphael, Titian, and Corregio, which Aubincourt had collected, were placed,) into a parlour, whoſe ſimplicity and elegance beſpoke the characters of the poſſeſſors of the manſion.

Aubincourt, in a ſhort time, joined them, and converſed with his uſual penſiveneſs; but which was mixed with more apparent deſire to intereſt them, than ever they had before noticed.

Matilda gave them a ſhort account of the viſitors at Ruthyne, and aſked Aubincourt if he would not call before their departure. He gave her his promiſe, and after a moſt agreeable morning, they walked back to the Tower.

In their way, they were met by lord Waldemar and Mr. Marnonville; the former

mer of whom, ſportively demanded an account of their morning's peregrination.

"We have been to call on a friend," ſaid Matilda, and evaded any further queſtions till dinner-time, when Waldemar, mentioning his meeting the ladies in their ſtroll, the earl enquired whither they had been.

"We have accidentally met with a neighbour, my lord," ſaid Matilda, "and we have this morning returned a viſit ſhe paid us lately :---her name is Laurie : ſhe lives with her nephew, a Mr. Aubincourt,"

The earl's countenance fell; the count looked at Matilda for a moment, and then turning to Auguſta, who ſat next him, began with eagerneſs to converſe on a ſubject, trifling in itſelf; but rendered comic, by his earneſt manner.

The earl enquired how they found the walking, as he believed it rained ſlightly

in

in the night? Matilda was anſwering him, when miſs Marnonville interrupted her, by reverting to their viſit, and begging to know of what family the Aubincourts were, and what could induce the people to live in ſo ſolitary a place?

The earl appeared angry, and talked loud enough to the counteſs, to drown the voice of miſs Marnonville; but he neither aſſented or diſſented to their viſiting, and the ſubject was mentioned no more.

In the afternoon every one appeared gloomy and diſſatisfied;---the counteſs and lady Marnonville took a ſhort walk, with Mr. Wilmot and ſir John Rattle, but the humour of the latter was loſt on the count, and the former was not juſt then a ſubject for her ſatire.

Mr. Marnonville took a book, lord Waldemar leaned over the chair of Matilda, in ſilence, and Frampton was moſt inſupportably teizing to all. Miſs Marnonville oc-

cupied herſelf in practiſing all the alluring attitudes ſhe had learned of her mirror, but languor dictated them; and the whole party appeared diſguſted and gloomy.

Auguſta, alone, preſerved any tolerable ſpirits; but the neglect of lord Waldemar, (who, as well as Marnonville, had conceived a little jealouſy, from the ſiſters having walked to Mrs. Laurie's, where, they had avowed, lived a ſingle man,) took from her uſual good humour, and determining to diſſipate the liſtleſſneſs that ſhe found creeping on her, ſhe began to romp a little with Frampton; but his hard hands ſoon made her repent, and ſitting down again, no voice was heard, till the entrance of the counteſs, but that of the rude and boiſterous boy.

The counteſs was evidently as much out of temper at her return, as when ſhe walked out. Her illneſs was encreaſed by her ſecluſion, and ſhe was ſenſible ſhe could never

never be well again, till ſhe got to Arthurine.

The earl and count did not appear till ſupper-time, and then were ſilent and reſerved.

One cloud ſeemed to hang over all the party, and each one prepared to retire early to their reſpective chambers.

Matilda and Auguſta determined to enjoy themſelves when alone; and, bidding the maid put a good ſupply of wood in their chamber, they each ſelected a book from the library; and, drawing a table cloſe to their fire-ſide, amuſed themſelves with reading and converſation till the uſual hour of repoſe.

CHAP. XI.

THE next day, all chagrin ſeemed diſſipated, but that of the earl and count, whoſe behaviour began to appear myſterious to the ſiſters. They joined the company but ſeldom, and then appeared abſent; their anſwers were ſhort, and ſometimes almoſt rude; and if, by exertion, this inattention wore off, their behaviour was unuſual, and appeared conſtrained.

The evening proved very gloomy, and Matilda, croſſing the hall, imagined herſelf

ſelf deceived, when ſhe ſaw the count croſs it alſo, with Humphry. Some time after, as ſhe was deſcending the ſtairs, ſhe ſaw Humphry again, and with him a perſon, ſhe no longer doubted to be the count, enter a ſmall room, and, ſhutting the door, immediately locked it.

Matilda puzzled herſelf with conjectures concerning the count's buſineſs with Humphry, but ſhe reſolved to ſay nothing of the matter to Auguſta, whoſe vivid imagination generally caught at every circumſtance bordering on the wonderful; and, from appearances, deduced facts, which never did, or could exiſt.

When the ſiſters retired for the night, they drew chairs to the fire, (as was their uſual cuſtom,) to talk over the occurrences of the day.

They had not ſat long, ere they heard ſomething of a noiſe in one of the chambers adjoining, which they never yet had

opened. Terrified at this, Auguſta caught her ſiſter's hand, who begged ſhe would not ſpeak. They liſtened, and heard it again, but could not exactly diſtinguiſh from whence it came. Matilda began to be much alarmed, for the noiſe ſounded as if it was endeavoured to be prevented as much as poſſible. It at length grew much louder, and then ceaſed all at once.

The ſiſters ſat almoſt ſtiffened with terror, but they each determined, whatever it might be, not to mention it to the family. Matilda propoſed that they ſhould not go to bed; and having forgot to replace the books they had taken the night before, they now reſumed them, and endeavoured to read. But the remembrance of the noiſe, and a fear of its returning, kept their thoughts on the rack, and forbade reading, reflection, or converſation, except ſuch as was tending toward the object of their alarm.

"Let us not, however, mention this," ſaid

ſaid Matilda, " until we know more concerning it."

Auguſta agreed to the propriety of the meaſure; but declared, ſhe thought ſhe could never ſleep there again.

" Why not," ſaid Matilda, " nothing can reach us;---our doors are faſt!"

" But if we hear the noiſe!"——

" That alone cannot harm us; and even its cauſe, perhaps, if we knew the truth, may not be very terrible."

But the reſt of the night paſſing quietly away, Auguſta began to loſe her terrors; and, toward the break of day, each finding herſelf ſleepy, laid down without undreſſing, and paſſed the hours between that and breakfaſt, in repoſe, rendered more ſound, and much ſweeter, by the fatigue they had experienced in their watching.

Lord Waldemar and Mr. Marnonville ſoon forgetting their former trifling jealouſies, contrived to draw Matilda and Auguſta into little reading parties in the library; in which they were ſometimes joined by miſs Marnonville, and rarely, as a favour, admitted ſir John Rattle.

In theſe hours, the affection of lord Waldemar for Auguſta grew fixed, and that of Marnonville for Matilda, encreaſed almoſt to adoration.

Lord Waldemar, who excelled in taſte for landſcape-painting, directed Auguſta's wild hand to more accurate delineation; and while he improved her talent, taught her heart to feel the power of his accompliſhments.

But not ſo fortunate was the more ardent Marnonville;---he read with Matilda, he deſcribed to her the intereſting ſcenes he had witneſſed in his travels, he watched every turn of her countenance; and though he

he often ſaw the ſparkle of admiration in her mild eye, and the beam of enthuſiaſtic curioſity play over her beautiful features, he never could obſerve one look,---one word,---that bade him hope ſhe might ever love.

Pained at the evident progreſs of what his firſt attentions had made her dread, and ſcorning to keep him a moment in ſuſpence, Matilda endeavoured to give him an opportunity of revealing his ſentiments, that ſhe might by a deciſive anſwer, put an end to whatever hopes he could entertain, and check the paſſion ſhe felt, ſhe could never return. But the ill-fated young man ſuffered his attachment to encreaſe without reſolving to know his fate; or rather, ran headlong on a precipice, from which his wilful blindneſs, ſuffered him to fall; for had he reflected; his reaſon would have ſhewn him, how improbable it was that ſir Archibald would conſent to an union with Matilda, while he had another young woman in his eye, whoſe

ſuperior

ſuperior recommendation was her *hundred thouſands.*

How often the young mind believes what it wiſhes! How ſeldom liſtens to what is reaſonable! Did we ever reflect, in the midſt of our purſuit, after what we imagine will give us happineſs, that the very means we take, may probably render us miſerable, ſhould we not ſtartle at our danger, and fly the phantom we before thought ſo amiable?

It was not long before a ſlight mention of Aubincourt by the ſiſters, again rouſed the jealouſy of Marnonville, and ſo mad was his paſſion, ſo violent his fears, that he determined the next time the ſiſters walked out, to obſerve their ſteps and follow them at a diſtance.

But it was long before they ventured out of the foreſt, and if they walked another way, it was only to aſcend a part of the mountain that roſe immediately before the Tower,

Tower, to obſerve the effect of the dark grey buildings among the green foliage, and that of the ſun on the landſcape at different hours of the day.

An incident entirely new, and ſomewhat unexpected, at length gave a different turn to the feelings of ſome of the party, at the Tower.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

THE earl had remarked the growing partiality of lord Waldemar, with as much delight, as it was poſſible for him to do any thing that regarded the welfare of daughters, for whom he did not feel parental affection. No objection, therefore, was ſtarted, when lord Waldemar propoſed himſelf as his ſon. He diſmiſſed him with promiſes of engaging Auguſta to agree to his wiſhes; and ſending for her, like a ſkilful politician, mentioned the affair, and ſeemed ſomewhat averſe to it.

He

He had not miſtaken her diſpoſition;—finding that the earl wiſhed her to acknowledge lord Waldemar had inſpired her with ſome degree of affection, ſhe frankly owned ſhe had not ſeen him with indifferent eyes; but at the ſame time, ſaid, her love had not yet gained the aſcendance of her duty, and that, if his lordſhip thought proper, ſhe would endeavour to relinquiſh his idea.

The earl made a merit of ſeeing them happy at the expenſe of his own wiſhes, and bade Auguſta, ſince the affair muſt ſoon be concluded, prepare to be lady Waldemar in leſs than a month.

This ſtroke was unexpected. Auguſta loved lord Waldemar, but ſhe was too much pleaſed with the little coquettiſh airs ſhe was now at liberty to treat him with, to like the idea of loſing her reign ſo ſoon; however, ſooner than loſe him, ſhe choſe to comply; and ſeeking Matilda whom ſhe found in the chamber, ſhe threw

threw herſelf on a ſeat, and half ludicrous, half ſerious, related what had paſſed.

Her own little emotions were inſtantly forgotten, when ſhe ſaw Matilda turn pale and ſtagger to a chair, overcome with ſurpriſe and grief.

"And are you then about to leave me Auguſta?" exclaimed ſhe, "what ſhall I do when I have loſt you?"

But ſhe reflected, after the indulgence of a few tears, that her ſorrow was ſelfiſh, and that her ſiſter ſtood in need of as much conſolation, and more counſel than herſelf; for when Auguſta's firſt hurries of ſurpriſe were over, ſhe felt all thoſe terrors incident to inexperienced females, on entering the great world, in which ſhe was to take a diſtinguiſhed part.

Matilda ſucceeded in calming her emotions, by repreſenting the amiable charac-

ter

ter for temper and morals borne by lord Waldemar.

" You will have a companion Auguſta," cried ſhe, " with whom you cannot be unhappy, unleſs you render him ſo firſt. It is fortunate for you that your affections were not placed on a leſs worthy object; and let not the glare of faſhion, or the rapid whirl of amuſements, ever draw you from thoſe domeſtic pleaſures you are calculated to give and to enjoy. The elegance of lord Waldemar's taſte, will ever be a ſource of refined happineſs; and the ſtrength of his underſtanding, will delightfully blend with the brilliance of your wit; but you will probably meet with flatterers, it will be your intereſt to avoid; and let me beſeech you, truſt to him alone for the guidance of your judgement."

Auguſta embraced her ſiſter, and promiſing to obſerve her advice; they deſcended into the ſaloon, where they met Waldemar, in whoſe contenance, joy ſtrove with

with delicacy, for the feelings of Auguſta; but which, however, could not entirely repreſs the expreſſion of his eyes.

Matilda, as ſoon as poſſible, left the room, and ſtrolling over the lawn, ſat down by the lake to ruminate on the occurrences of the morning.

This was the firſt misfortune Matilda had ever ſeverely felt. She had fondly imagined her mind was formed to repel grief, and had nurſed an idea, that fortitude could quiet ſorrow, however violent; but ſhe found the anticipated loſs of her ſiſter, made an inroad on her peace, which ſhe juſtly feared would be followed by more acute feelings.

She looked at the Tower, and her forlorn ſituation when her only friend ſhould have deſerted her, ſtruck her forcibly; and when herſelf ſhould be the lone inhabitant of that gloomy place, ſhe feared the dominion of ſuperſtition would be accelerated,

rated, by the deep ſolitude that muſt then ſurround her.

But her fears for herſelf were trifling, when compared to her grief for the loſs of her ſiſter; and, after a few turns in the avenue of the foreſt, imagining the approach of dinner would make her abſence noticed, ſhe endeavoured to be a little calm, and entered the hall, where ſhe met Mr. Marnonville.

Thrown entirely off his guard, by the traces of ſorrow that yet remained on her cheek, he caught her hand.

"Heavens! lady Matilda," cried he, paſſionately, "you grieve!"

"Oh, no, Mr. Marnonville, not grieve; I only ſuffer a little uneaſineſs."

"May I know the cauſe?"

"It is nothing of conſequence enough to trouble you with."

" Can it be prevented, or even ſoftened?"

" Oh, no;---nor do I wiſh it," ſaid Matilda, mournfully; the tears ſtarting again, in ſpite of herſelf.

" I feel how inſufficient my power is, to offer conſolation to lady Matilda, even were I acquainted with the nature of her uneaſineſs!"

" You will know it ſoon; and I hope a little reflection will enable me to bear it with calmneſs."

He releaſed her hand, and, bowing, walked towards the parlour, while ſhe ſlowly aſcended the ſtairs.

At dinner, the contraſt of countenances was ſtriking. The earl was evidently rejoiced---the counteſs evidently chagrined---lord Waldemar was endeavouring to conceal his joy---Matilda her grief; and Auguſta vainly

vainly aiming at compoſure; Mr. Marnonville was melancholy, and his ſiſter tireſomely ſentimental; and, as ſoon as poſſible, each of the younger party roſe from the table, and retired different ways.

The counteſs ſoon propoſed to leave the gentlemen to their bottle; and, begging lady Marnonville's excuſe, laid down, rather to diſſipate intolerable vexation, than illneſs; and Matilda, after having repaid herſelf for the conſtraint ſhe ſuffered at dinner, ſought her ſiſter, that they might walk together.

They were juſt going out, when, to their ſorrow, miſs Marnonville entered the hall, and, catching ſight of them, begged ſhe might be of their party.

Her affectation was at this time the more inſupportable, as the ſiſters wiſhed to participate their feelings, and receive from each other the conſolation they needed.

They wandered out of the avenue, and miſs Marnonville running to an opening to view a particular cloud, the ſiſters loſt ſight of her, and catching at the opportunity to exchange their ſentiments, perceived not, for ſome time, that ſhe did not return.

"She muſt certainly be gone back to the Tower," ſaid Auguſta, "let us, too, return, my dear Matilda, for the wind grows cold, and I think it whiſtles mournfully among the trees."

"Oh!" cried Matilda, "it is delight now, to what it will be, when I ſhall have loſt you, and ſhall wander here alone, for the want of better amuſement."

The chord touched both their hearts, and they walked in ſilence, till they came within ſight of the Tower.

A few tears had diſcompoſed their countenances, and Matilda propoſed they ſhould walk

walk round by the chapel, which would give them time to recollect themſelves.

Returning, they ſaw a figure in white, a ſhort diſtance before them, and, making no doubt but that it was miſs Marnonville, they called on her to ſtop.

The figure ſtarted, and walked ſwifter. Auguſta ran to it, ſtill calling on miſs Marnonville, when it flew from her, and was loſt in the duſk of evening, before Matilda could reach her ſiſter.

"She is an odd girl," cried Auguſta, "and we will take no more pains after her."

They entered the Tower, and in the ſaloon, found miſs Marnonville, playing at picquet with her mother.

"I am ſorry we were ſo unfortunate as to miſs you, madam," ſaid Matilda, when the game was done.

"Ah, you were very cruel," returned miſs Marnonville; "what a walk have I had! Every moment, I imagined I ſaw ſhapes among the trees, and even fancied at laſt, I heard myſelf called! Ah, how I ſhuddered! The wind came roaring over the tall trees, and when I caught ſight of the Tower, it added to my gloomy imaginations, and I could almoſt have thought I was in the power of thoſe, whoſe frowning caſtle threatened impriſonment, and perhaps death."

"You would have done well then," cried the counteſs, contemptuouſly, "to have fled, while it was in your power!"

"But why," cried Matilda, "did you not join us again, after you had examined the cloud you ran to ſee?"

"I returned immediately to the ſpot, but you were gone."

"Pardon me, you muſt certainly miſtake;

take;---we ſtayed near a quarter of an hour."

"But you do not recollect that miſs Marnonville would then have had no room for deſcription," cried the counteſs, "and that for this evening ſhe muſt have contented herſelf with mere common-place converſation!"

"If you wiſhed to find us," cried Auguſta, "why run away when I called to you, beſide the chapel?"

"I did not hear you, though I certainly paſſed the chapel; nor did I run."

"It is a little extraordinary, that we ſhould loſe ſight of you inſtantaneouſly, if you did not run."

"Oh!" cried the counteſs, with a ſhort laugh, "you have probably met with one of miſs Marnonville's ſhapes; and even had it been herſelf, ſhe would have taken

your calling, for one of the illuſions of fancy!"

Matilda perceiving miſs Marnonville was really hurt by theſe ſallies, ſaid, they were extremely glad to find her at home, and hoped ſhe would pardon them for their apparent neglect.

She returned a look ſo expreſſive of gratitude, for this relief, that Matilda perceived, under her fanciful failings, ſhe hid a good and ſuſceptible heart.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

A FORTNIGHT after the earl's command, Matilda ſaw Auguſta joined to lord Waldemar, and endeavoured to avoid caſting a damp on their happineſs, by murmurs or dejection.

A few hours after the ceremony, lord Waldemar met her alone in the eaſt parlour.

"My ſweet ſiſter," ſaid he, gaily taking her hands, "you are always ſerious, and

and ſometimes ſad. Would to Heaven, poor Marnonville cauſed this gentle dejection!"

"Alas!" cried ſhe, trying to ſmile, "have I not already cauſes enough for dejection, without adding another?"

"But," cried he, "let me inform you of ſomething to make you ſmile, and which, I hope, will perſuade you to accompany us to London."

He then proceeded to tell her of the ſtate of Marnonville's heart, and begged her to give him a little encouragement.

"I will anſwer for his temper and morals," ſaid he, "beſides, his family is good, his father rich, and there is a great proſpect of happineſs."

"There might be, my lord, if I could command my affections; but however I may admire and eſteem Mr. Marnonville, he never can have my love. If you think it

it conſiſtent with prudence and delicacy, you will do me a favour by acquainting him of my ſentiments."

"Conſider, Matilda!"

"I do, my lord; I conſider, that I ſhould make myſelf miſerable, without giving him happineſs. I reſpect Mr. Marnonville, and if his late dejection originates in me, I moſt ſincerely pity him, but urge me no further on the ſubject, I beſeech you;---it only diſtreſſes *me*, and can never benefit *him*."

"I have done," ſaid lord Waldemar. "I will let him know his fate, and adviſe him to bear it with patience,"

They ſeparated, and the reſt of the day differed in nothing from the preceding ones, except that lord Waldemar was more gay, and Auguſta leſs ſo than uſual.

At

At night, Matilda's grief at the ſeparation from her ſiſter, ſomewhat gave way to her dread of ſleeping alone in that gloomy chamber. The beams of her lamp hardly penetrated half its extent; the reſt remained in a darkneſs at which ſhe ſcarcely dared to look. The window which was placed in that part, rattled in the wind, while not a ſtar gleamed through its ruſty panes, to break the deep gloom, her lamp ſeemed but to render more terrible.

As ſhe ſat penſively by the fire, her thoughts ſomewhat taken up by Auguſta's early marriage, but often glancing on the dreary ſituation ſhe was placed in, a faint noiſe ſounded, as if beneath the window.

It encreaſed, and ſhe diſtinguiſhed it to be the voice of complaining. She ſtarted up, and, though dreading to explore that part of the room, wiſhed to get to the window.

She remembered the owl, and endeavouring

vouring to reaſon herſelf out of her fantaſtic terrors, cautiouſly advanced towards the caſement; on unfaſtening which, the blaſt inſtantly extinguiſhed the lamp, ſhe had inadvertently placed too near.

The noiſe had ceaſed, and nothing was to be heard but the murmurs of the wind, in ſome tall trees that grew near the window, with now and then the ſcream of the ſolitary night-birds, that reſted themſelves on the battlement.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.